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Canada's Housewares Magazine



November 2015

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Contents



12



14



24



38



We take a look inside Australia's global *gia* winner on page 32.

Features

- 30** **Our consuming passions**
Retail contributor Candace Sutcliffe explores the therapeutic value of food and how it impacts the retailers who sell cooking products.
- 32** **Something completely different down under**
Meet the owners of Koskela in Australia, one of five outstanding retailers to be honoured with a Global *gia* award this year.
- 38** **The power of perseverance**
Bruno Belanger had a tragic start to his retail career yet he's been able to rebound and today his unique northern B.C. store – Gemma's – is thriving.

New Product Reviews

- 46** **Vacuums, brooms, brushes and cleaning products**
- 52** **Wooden serveware and housewares**
- 56** **Coffee pods, mugs and accessories**
- 60** **Home storage and organization**

Departments

November/December 2015
Volume 26 • Number 6



6

Calendar of Events

8

Opening Lines

52



10

People In The News

12

Industry Tribute

56

14

Retail News

On our cover



24

Vendor News

65

Advertisers Index

66

Super Sales Person

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Opening Lines

Show some gratitude. You'll feel better.

As I sit down to write this editorial, it's the end of a glorious Canadian thanksgiving weekend. This is always my favourite time of year. Without the hustle of the holiday season and the mess of a gift exchange, it's the one time when families can sit back, relax, and really talk to each other before digging into that turkey. It's a perfect time to reflect and be grateful for all that we have.



Gratitude is getting a lot of press these days. That's because it's something we often overlook when faced with the strife of people around the world, and the challenges we face in our own retail businesses right here at home.

It's worth reminding ourselves every day, not just at Thanksgiving, how blessed we are to live in the best country in the world and to enjoy a lifestyle most people can only dream of. Deep down, despite our rants against politicians and the state of the economy, we all know we've got it good. We just forget sometimes.

In our house, at the suggestion of my friend and contributing editor Denise Gaze, I now have a "Gratitude Jar". The concept is simple. By adding a note to the jar 'giving thanks' for something good at the end of each day, we are better able to think positively and appreciate what we have. So far, it seems to be working. In fact, research shows that being grateful is actually good for your physical health. Heart patients who score high on gratitude assessment tests experience better mood, better sleep, more confidence and are less fatigued than those with a low gratitude trait.

The science of gratitude has revealed that grateful people are more fulfilled and lead a richer life. Sadly, fewer than half of the population reports being grateful on a regular basis. Negativity, it seems, is in our genes and has been part of the evolutionary process. In prehistoric times, man was always scanning the environment in fear of either predators or poison berries and this survival mechanism has affected our brain's development. Our tendency to look on the dark side is so deeply ingrained it now takes three good emotions to balance out a single bad one. Yet positive emotions activate our neural circuits to process creative, novel thoughts that allow us to take on new perspectives, and give us a feeling of well-being.

With gratitude comes optimism. When you're forced to focus on the good things, it's easier to overlook the challenges, or at least to find a silver lining. Hey, I publish a print magazine for people who operate retail stores. You would think we'd be out of business years ago, but somehow we've managed to maintain a loyal readership in a niche market, and for that I am grateful every day.

After almost three decades in this industry, I still get excited about the potential of the coming year. Sure, the pace of change in our marketplace right now is unprecedented, but with change comes opportunities, and I think really good retailers will find them. Even the declining value of the loonie can be advantageous for those located along our borders. It may help their bottom line this Christmas as fewer Canadians are shopping in the U.S., and more Americans are coming here.

And speaking of the coming year, I am particularly grateful to the International Housewares Association, who have decided to move the Global Innovator Awards gala to Saturday night during the March housewares show. They have traditionally been held on Sunday, which conflicted with Canada Night and has prevented me from attending one of my favourite nights of the year. I'm thrilled to say that in 2016, I will not only be able attend Canada Night, but I have the privilege to serve as Chairperson of the event once again.

This special night, where Canadian buyers, retailers and vendors gather in a purely social atmosphere, will introduce some exciting new features this year (including a whiskey tasting bar!) that I know will make the evening even more memorable for both guests and sponsors.

Watch for more details on Canada Night 2016 in upcoming issues of *Home Style* and make plans now to attend on Sunday, March 6th. You'll be grateful you did.

— Laurie O'Halloran
laurie@homestylemag.ca

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• **Jasmin Dugal** has been promoted to vice president of sales and marketing for Groupe SEB Canada.

• The International Housewares Association has announced that **Fred Dohn** of ARC International has been elected to its board of directors. In addition, **Gary Seehoff** of Envriholder Products has been named chairman of the board, **Gregory Cairo**, president of Groupe SEB USA, has been named vice chairman and **Brett Bradshaw** of Bradshaw International, has been named treasurer. **Keith Jaffee** of O2 Cool is retiring from the board and **Hildy Abrams** of Gourmet Settings as well as Bradshaw have been re-elected to three-year board terms. Also serving on the IHA board this year: **J.C. Collins** of Neatfreak; **Evan Dash** of StoreBound; **Dave Elliott** of KitchenAid; **Richard Joseph** of Joseph Joseph; **Robert Kay** of Taylor Precision Products; **Anthony Kircher** of Winix; **Daniel Oehy** of Swissmar; **Alejandro Peña** of Jarden

Consumer Solutions; **Paul Rowan** of Umbra; **David Sabin** of The Fuller Brush Co.; **Jenna Sellers Miller** of Architec; **Will Symonds** of DKB Household; and **Philippe Trudeau** of Trudeau Corp.

• **Patricia Ieraci** is the new director of sales for EveryWare Global, replacing Matt Carter, and **Mark Weisz** has been named sales account manager.

• The housewares industry was saddened to learn of the unexpected passing of **Dave Holden** on August 30th. Dave, who once worked for Hamilton Beach, died on August 30 at the age of 51.

A heartfelt thank you to all the suppliers and reps who helped make the 40th Anniversary celebrations at **Jolanta Interiors** a big hit this past June. Your generosity was very much appreciated. To everyone who participated.... thank you kindly!
Jolanta and Jogi Sudnik and staff



After enjoying a game of golf last October, we were reminiscing about the good old days and catching up on the latest news in the housewares industry. We'd like to send our congratulations, love and good wishes to Mary Higgins on her retirement!

Jim Grant and Hugh McDonald (above)

Thanks so much for your farewell to Mary Higgins in last month's issue. It's so great to see how much influence someone in the field can have on the journalists who cover them. It really says something about a person's character to induce such friendly words from a colleague!

Anjie Cho, Anjie Cho Designs

Once again, you have delivered a superb edition of *Home Style*. I so enjoyed reading about Mary Edwards, who helped us along the way from the very beginning. We were proud to work on a project with her in the 1990s that led to Danica being named supplier of the year at London Drugs.

Rodney Benson, Danica

Another awesome issue of *Home Style* – loved it, loved it, loved it!! What a grand send off for Mary. You did a terrific job, along with some of my old colleagues, covering Mary's colourful career. I was privileged to get to know Mary and John Vasconcelos during my enjoyable time spent with Gerry Byle at Bionaire. During those years we always managed to have a dinner together in Chicago and of course, enjoyed many memorable times together at Canada Night.

Dianne and Wally McTaggart (retired)

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The industry loses one of it's finest

When **Al Langelaan** passed away in Bancroft, Ontario, on August 28th, the Canadian housewares industry lost one of the finest sales reps I've ever known. Perpetually happy, always ready and willing to help, Al was a bright spot at every industry trade show, with that gorgeous smile and a bright twinkle in his eye. He set an example for so many excellent reps who followed in his footsteps and touched many lives in his very special way.

For me personally, Al was a trusted source of industry news, a loyal reader and a cherished friend. Many of the retailers I profiled in the early years of *Home Style* were recommended by Al. He was a joy and will always be remembered for his kindness to me when it mattered most.

Al started his career as the owner of a hardware store, which is where he developed an empathy for retailers that was his trademark. He began his sales career with D.H. Lisser in the 1970s alongside his good friend, Ralph Lawry and went on to work for the Weil Company, Fox Run and Classic Chef (which has merged with David Shaw).

His territory covered much of south-western Ontario, with a few northern posts as well, and he loved dealing with the independent store owners, many of

whom fondly called him 'Uncle Al'.

In tribute, we asked some of Al's friends to share their memories. – *L.O.*

- Nothing, absolutely nothing, was ever too much for Al. There could be ice and snow on the roads but if you needed products, he would drive just about anywhere to get it and bring it to you. Although that may sound easy, it sums up what Al's life was about. He was a "giver" in every sense of the word. The passion and love he carried for his family, his clients, his shops (yes, they were his!) and our industry in general was remarkable. I will miss our visits, his advice, his knowledge and his gentleness, but mostly I will miss that twinkle in his eye! Uncle Al was a very special guy.

– *Phyllis Kramer, The Keeping Room*

- 'Uncle Al' has been a very important part of my life for 30 years. He was responsible for introducing me to this wonderful Industry and remained a true friend and a mentor throughout the entire time I knew him. I will cherish many wonderful memories of our shared experiences and will truly miss him.

– *Ford Nixon, Nixon Agencies*

- I first met Al when he had a hardware store in St. Catharines. We met up again



at the Toronto Hardware Show in 1975 where he introduced me to D.H. Lisser. He was instrumental in helping me start my sales agency and we remained friends from that day on.

Al was a highly respected salesman. He was always a fun person to be with and we shared many good times.

– *Jim Moodie, Moodie Sales Agency*

- Al was larger than life – that's how I will always remember him. He was an icon in our industry. We worked together at Fox Run, where he 'ruled' the Southwestern Ontario territory. He was a good friend to many, including his peers and his competition. He worked long and hard for his customers. Al was the classic old school salesman – cigarette in one hand and a pen in the other. But there was always a smile on his face.

– *Kate Wise, Port-Style Enterprises*



Left: Al is shown salmon fishing in Port Alberni, B.C., a trip he took with Ford Nixon.

Above: Al with Kate Wise and the late Ralph Lawry when they all worked at Fox Run Craftsmen.

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When Jacqueline Jacek wanted someone creative to help her develop and promote a new Marie Antoinette collection of fine chocolates, she knew just who to ask. Randall Macdonald, the co-owner of **Call the Kettle Black** in Edmonton, known for his creative flair in retail, was the perfect choice.

Jacek is known for putting a unique spin on traditional chocolate flavours and shapes so Randall decided to focus on the decadence of the era.

He researched the look, sights and smells of the sumptuous gilded court of Louis XVI. Powdered wigs in purple and orange were scented with orris root and lavender. The wealthy used a lot of very expensive lace and fans were carried by both men and women.

To promote the line, Randall and Jacqueline both dressed in period costume (top left) and encouraged customers to sample the new line, which was beautifully displayed on Danesco's BIA collection of mugs, plates and two-tiered server featuring vintage European images, shown left and above.

For the past three years, Call the Kettle Black has been invited to set up a Pop-Up shop at the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge for a 'Christmas in November' event. This year, they featured Jacek chocolates.

Using chocolate as a canvas, Jacek has recreated the colours, textures and flavours that are representative of the times of Marie Antoinette. One highlight of the line is the dark chocolate infused with orange blossom. The exterior is adorned with shimmering gold and a grid-like accent inspired by the window panes in the Hall of Mirrors.



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Retailers News Update

Retailers more confident this year

Retailers in Canada say they are more confident than they have been in years when it comes to their financial outlook, and many attribute strong sales to an increasing focus on customer service.

The majority (84%) of survey respondents in American Express' annual Canadian Retail Insights poll said they forecast strong sales over the next 12 months. While 85% said they feel competition is increasing, almost all of those surveyed – 97% – said they were focusing on improving customer service to drive sales.

“In today's market, consumers have more options than ever before, and to stay competitive we're seeing businesses make customer service a major priority,” says Jennifer Hawkins, American Express Canada vice-president and general manager of merchant services.

“Customer service has long been a key ingredient of successful companies and we understand this first hand. Not surprisingly, nearly all retailers surveyed told us they are making efforts to improve service as a way to stand out from the pack, and in turn, grow loyalty and revenue.”

The increase in confidence in the retail sector is supported by data from Statistics Canada. In June, Canada had a year-over-year increase of 0.6%, with total retail sales reaching \$43.2 billion. Sales increased in 8 retail subsectors, with electronics and appliance stores seeing the largest increases with 9.4%.

Physical stores need to go digital

Brick-and-mortar retailers are scrambling to win back consumers who have turned to the web to make their purchases. To catch up with changing consumer behavior, physical retailers are adopting digital technologies – from beacons to interactive fitting rooms – to keep customers engaged. These in-store technologies are interactive, productive tools designed to catch the attention of increasingly tech-savvy consumers.

In a new report, BI Intelligence explored the top in-store technologies that represent the future of retail. It found that to keep up with online retailers, traditional brick-and-mortars are adopting digital technologies meant to enhance the in-store experience. E-commerce sales in the U.S. were up 14% in the second quarter of this year compared to growth of just 1% for total retail.

Brick-and-mortars already have a distinct advantage over online retailers but they need to start leveraging it. Physical stores let shoppers get up close to a product. 60% of consumers say they would rather shop in stores instead of online because it gives them the ability to touch and feel a product.

Many brick-and-mortar retailers have been testing out a number of new digital technologies aimed at bringing the connected experience into the store. These technologies include beacons, interactive storefront displays, mobile devices in store associates' hands, and heat mapping.

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HBC invests in order to drive future growth

As it continues expanding and consolidating its international operations, Hudson's Bay Company has formed initiatives to enhance multi-channel retail operations, accelerate financial performance and drive future growth. The company also has successfully completed the previously announced acquisition of Galeria Holding, parent company of Germany's leading department store Galeria Kaufhof and Belgium's only department store, Galeria Inno for an enterprise value of about \$2.8 billion.

With the Galeria acquisition, HBC has established an international retail platform with over 460 locations across eight banners in four countries. It now operates the leading department store banners in Canada, Germany, and Belgium, in addition to its iconic banners Saks Fifth Avenue and Lord & Taylor.

In North America, Hudson's Bay other initiatives include:

- Establishing new Centers of Excellence for the customer relationship management, creative and human resources functions, which will complement existing centers of excellence in digital, information technology, legal, logistics, and real estate operations.
- Consolidating key functions to enable more productive and efficient operations as well as to refocus resources on customer-facing business elements.
- Implementing technology enhancements and accelerating tech consolidation to one common platform across store banners.
- Aligning resources to match business strategy while investing in areas that will drive growth.

Taken together, HBC believes the outlined initiatives should result in annualized cost savings and synergies totaling \$75 million during fiscal year 2016 in addition to the previously announced synergies associated with the integration of Saks, which the company acquired in 2013. HBC anticipates expanding the Saks operation, including introducing it to Canada. HBC stated that it anticipates taking a \$20 million third

quarter charge in connection with the realignment.

In announcing the initiatives, Richard Baker, HBC's governor and executive chairman, said: "Through organic growth and acquisitions, HBC has established itself as one of the fastest-growing department store retailers in North America and a truly unique global company. This significant growth has created meaningful opportunities for us to further build our business while operating even more effectively."

As part of its Galeria initiative, HBC also plans to eventually introduce Saks in Germany. Other initiatives that will follow HBC's acquisition of Galeria include expansion of brand availability in the European retail operation and enhancing digital capabilities.

Stocks can now be given as a gift card

Retailers including Kmart, Office Depot, Lowe's, Safeway and Toys R Us will start selling gift cards that holders can exchange for stock in major corporations such as Apple, Coca-Cola, Facebook and 17 other companies.

In announcing the initiative, Avi Lele, CEO of Stockpile, the startup that created the cards, said: "It is taking something complicated and expensive and making it accessible to everyone."

The American Girl gets cooking at WS

The American Girl by Williams-Sonoma line officially became available in Williams-Sonoma retail stores nationwide last October. The collection will complement the cooking classes that are being introduced by the retailer this summer. American Girl items will range in price from \$9.95 to \$59.95.

The new line includes a baking cookbook, five baking sets, three baking mixes, three aprons, and three spatulas.



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Online grocer moves to bricks and mortar

Making the move to bricks and mortar from online grocery was a question of logistics and technology, says Peter van Stolk, CEO of online grocery service Spud. But van Stolk isn't one to shy away from a challenge. The entrepreneur, who began his career by turning a juice bar into specialty soft drink company Jones Soda, aims to approach daunting challenges in unconventional ways. Van Stolk bought Spud (sustainable produce urban delivery) in 2010, and the company now delivers across B.C., Alberta, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Now, he's bringing the online experience in-store. His new store, branded "Be Fresh Local Market", opened in Kitsilano near downtown Vancouver this summer. He has four other bricks-and-mortar stores – two in Calgary and two in Vancouver – that he calls market cafés.

The Canadian stores range between 1,000 and 1,500 square feet. The miniscule size is a plus, van Stolk says, with benefits including a small footprint, low rent, and no parking lot to pay for in an overheated real estate market. Customers are expected to have a coffee, socialize and do a little shopping.

Befresh 31, the latest Kitsilano locale, is aimed at walkers and cyclists. "People come, sit, enjoy and shop," he says. "It's kind of like a community centre." Opening a small store allows customers to pick up everyday essentials. What customers don't need immediately, they'll order online and he'll deliver.

Van Stolk says he's an advocate of on-demand delivery and smaller inventories, which means while the big chains might have more than 100 SKUs of produce, he'll have half that stored in his warehouse. He says Spud will see new product turnover every 12.4 days, but 80% of items are in and out within 48 hours.

"Checkout counter charity" has become big business for Canadian retailers. In 2014, donations added to point-of-sale transactions were used by 29% of Canadian shoppers. And though some consumers resent the intrusion and underlying guilt if they say 'no' to the cashier, in-store fundraising has added up to 20% to many major campaigns. For example, Loblaw proudly reported last year that their point-of-sale campaigns have raised more than \$4.2 million since 2008.


Amazon launches Handmade store

In a move to compete with Etsy, Amazon will be launching an online store called Handmade At Amazon, a marketplace for invited artisans to sell their unique, handcrafted goods to customers worldwide.

The online store hasn't launched yet and the e-commerce functionality is not currently set up, however, the current Amazon Handmade marketplace page gives a glimpse of how the marketplace will work. Artisans can receive or apply to receive an invitation to set up their own online storefront to showcase their products. They will learn how to use the Amazon Seller technology and listing tools to market their product online for free, and then those products and product pages will be visible to Amazon customers.

According to Amazon, all products available in the marketplace must be made entirely by hand, hand-altered, or hand assembled. Mass-produced products or products handmade by a different artisans than those in the seller's company are not eligible to sell in the Handmade marketplace.

Current product categories accepted by the marketplace are jewelry, home products (art, baby bedding, bath, bedding, furniture, home decor, kitchen and dining, lighting, patio, lawn and garden, storage and organization), party supplies and stationery. Amazon noted that it is working to open up more categories in the coming months.




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Coffeemakers lead the category in sales

Nearly every category of small kitchen electrics saw exciting introductions this year, but beverage makers still dominate the newest offerings. While it's no surprise that coffee brewers are still hot, there are still many unexpected turns in the kitchen electrics marketplace. Today's shoppers are buying for a kitchen that is downsized, geared toward health-consciousness or fully loaded with technology.

Both younger and older shoppers are making a big impact in the American housewares category. According to the NPD Group, older shoppers remain the steadiest group purchasing in this category, accounting for nearly three-quarters of small kitchen appliance sales. Yet in 2014, millennials proved to be the only generational segment that increased its purchases compared with the previous year. This under-35 age group accounted for 26% of the \$6.2 billion small kitchen appliance market in 2014, up 5% from 2013. As of this year, millennials now outnumber boomers and their spending power is increasing.

Downsizing has become a lifestyle trend for both older and younger consumers. A lot of media attention has been given to the trendy concept of occupying tiny houses, deemed as such if they are less than 1,000 square feet.

Retailers say they find many shoppers are also looking for small electrics that will multitask, rather than investing in several appliances that take up storage or counter space.

A trend among younger consumers toward eating at home may also be fueling purchases of small electrics, experts say. Not depending on fast-casual restaurants means shoppers look for different ways to find convenience.

Every three years, NPD asks U.S. consumers what appliances and cookware they have on hand, and how they use them, for its Kitchen Audit report. Findings from the end of 2014, the most recently released audit, show coffee is still a hot category, but pod makers aren't the only way to go.

Twenty-three percent of households in the Kitchen Audit own a coffee pod machine, with 80% saying they used their pod machine in the last month; 55% said they also own an electric drip coffeemaker.

B.C. and Ontario see a surge in shoppers

Many Canadian consumers may be re-trenching, particularly those in the oil-shocked provinces, but not those in British Columbia and Ontario.

In B.C. in particular, where surging home prices are fuelling wealth, the shopping spree isn't expected to slow down, according to a Royal Bank of Canada report.

"The spending binge of households showed no signs of abating so far this year, with retail sales advancing strongly by 7.6% from year-ago levels," economist Laura Cooper said in an RBC provincial forecast, citing the sharp rise in sales of furniture, building materials and gardening supplies.

It's not just housing wealth, but also warm weather, the weaker Canadian dollar and certain sporting events, she said.

RBC expects retail sales in B.C. to close the year with a 7% gain, rising 4.5% in 2016.

This is all part of the economic shift from Alberta to B.C. as the economic winner this year, with Ontario also coming on stronger.

As for shoppers in Ontario, RBC projects retail sales will climb 4.6% this year and 4.4%.

"Improved full-time employment prospects, no doubt, are among the factors fuelling quite solid consumer spending in the province at this stage," RBC senior economist Robert Hogue said of Ontario.

Vancouver and Toronto, of course, are the hot spots of the housing market.

Shoppers in other provinces won't be out in anywhere near as much force, according to the report, with actual pull-backs expected this year in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

A cool reception for the Keurig Kold

For months, Keurig Green Mountain and its investors have been pinning their hopes for a comeback on the Keurig Kold soda maker. But early reviews for the product have been cooler than the company expected.

Among the complaints listed by the first adopters are that the machine takes up too much countertop space, it's very loud, and it takes as long as five hours to cool down once it's plugged in. The long cooling process means that users must keep it plugged in on the counter if they wish to use it.

Some users also said the flavour was not as expected, or that the pods didn't always work. Overall, however, the device receives a respectable four out of five stars on Keurig's website, with many satisfied customers. Some have remarked the Kold saves refrigerator space and allows a variety of different flavors to be made in just a few minutes.

The number of tepid responses seems to indicate this may not be the blockbuster product that Keurig's investors, including Coca-Cola, which has a 17% stake in the company, were expecting.

Many comments noted the high price of the machine and the pods. The product retails for \$370 (U.S.), while the soda pods, which make 8 ounces each, sell for \$1.25 apiece. Drinking a liter of soda a day with the Keurig Kold would cost more than \$2,000 a year, including the price of the machine, as opposed to around \$400 annually purchasing it in the store.

Gibson buys Gates

Gibson Overseas has acquired Laurie Gates, and the person behind the name brand has joined Gibson's team as vice president of creative. The pairing combines Gates' design expertise with Gibson's production and merchandising reach. The bold designs feature bright, fashionable pieces with vibrant colours. The new range was featured at Gibson's Forty One Madison showroom at the New York Tabletop Market in October.



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Cuisina showcases new Trudeau Maison assortment

Trudeau officially launched the Trudeau Maison brand in Canada last September with the unveiling of the new assortment at Cuisina in Quebec City. The Canadian launch will be followed by the U.S. and Europe in early 2016.

While the original Trudeau brand is an integral part of the family-run company's long history and remains geared to the specialty and gourmet segments of the marketplace, Trudeau Maison will be offered in big box stores and grocery store chains. Focusing on design, durability and value, the line consists of 150 kitchen products, barware accessories and glassware, all backed with a lifetime warranty which will be key to its success.

Trudeau Maison has its own marketing strategies that address emerging industry sectors. The brand is distinguished by its bright colours, a uniform cross-category look, attractive photography and graphic packaging that stands out in a mass market retail setting.

Jacques Dubuc, president of Trudeau Maison explains, "Our goal with Trudeau Maison was to capitalize on Trudeau's positive brand recognition by introducing a new affordable retail collection with design elements that foodies, families and home cooks will love."

He adds: "With consumers changing the way they shop and retailers constantly reinventing themselves, we have to rethink our approach to remain relevant and competitive."

A well-known global marketer, Trudeau is dedicated to the housewares industry both at home and abroad. The company's industrial designers create products in collaboration with a product development team in Canada. Lifestyle trends are anticipated to follow consumer interests and provide new products that are on trend and in demand. This 360-degree approach, from the research and development to quality control, logistics, sales, marketing, customer service and in-store support has helped the company build a solid reputation around the world.



The executive team from Trudeau was on hand to help Mario Brochu unveil the new Trudeau Maison collection at Cuisina in Quebec City in September. Shown above, left to right, Anne-Marie Trudeau, national sales manager, Jacques Dubuc, président Trudeau Maison, Mario Brochu, président, Cuisina, France Marchand, category manager and Isabelle Carrière, marketing director for Trudeau. Anne-Marie and Mario also gave away two Trudeau Maison Party Grill Sets to two lucky customers during the promotion (centre).

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IHA identifies hot trends in the North American housewares market

As the global economy becomes reinvigorated, North America has emerged as one of the strongest markets for housewares. According to the most recent estimates, the U.S. and Canada accounted for 25.9% of global housewares retail sales totaling \$322.6 billion. For 2013 U.S. sales grew 5.9% over 2012 and 2015 is poised to show even more growth. Here are some of the latest trends in the market according to the International Housewares Association:

Differentiation

It has never been more important for retailers to have unique offerings to make certain that they entertain and continue to entice their customers. The retailer as curator is a growing trend. Many consumers are bewildered by broad assortments and look to their favorite retailers to help them select products. Narrow assortment stores such as Aldo, Costco and Trader Joe's are thriving and many other retailers are evaluating assortments to making shopping a little less challenging.

Design continues to be a key differentiator for both narrow and broad assortment retailers. Consumers are the key factor in helping retailers help their customers find products that match their needs and reflect their personal sense of style.

Internet of Things

Although still in its infancy, connected home and smart home products seem positioned to play an exploding role in home products. New connected products are announced almost daily. But a looming challenge will be the creation of a common operating portal that will allow the consumer to control many different appliances, lights, security systems, thermostats and other devices through their phone or tablet. Several are in development or on the market already.

Making at Home

With 3D printing at home poised to shake things up, the make-it-at-home movement continues to grow. As an example, there is a pancake printer available that functions like a

3D printer for unique and customized breakfast treats.

Although ebbing slightly in importance, home beverage making still drives consumers and the introduction of new cold beverage makers may propel this segment. For other categories, home coffee brewing seems to be growing in the premium coffee beverage segment. Blending and smoothie making are strong and growing as more companies offer products in the premium, high powered appliance segment.

Addressing the Consumer

The consumer is now completely in charge with purchasing options, which span many channels. Many traditional brick and mortar retailers have expanded their outreach to their customers that allows them to shop in person or across several digital platforms. And new this past fall suppliers who exhibit at the International Home + Housewares Show now receive free exposure to consumers on IHA Inspired Home, a consumer web destination that features products, food preparation recipes and tips, home organization advice and plenty of additional product information.

Omnichannel

As consumer online-only purchasing platforms continue to grow, traditional retail has begun to fight back. Some 95% of retail is still done in stores. Eight of the top ten U.S. Internet retailers also have a brick and mortar presence. And almost every single day, another U.S. retailer announces unprecedented growth in its online business. Williams Sonoma says that over 50% of its 2014 business was done online. Even Home Depot recently announced a 30% quarterly growth online; a total of 5% of their total business is now digital. Same with Bed Bath and Beyond. And most of the online purchasing has now moved to phones or tablets, a trend that will continue to accelerate.

Many of these trends can be seen at the 2016 International Home + Housewares Show to be held March 5-8 in Chicago. For more information, please visit www.housewares.org.



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Vendors In The News



Towel line now available nationally

Jogi's Import and Design will be importing the World's Best Tea Towels and Hands Towels for distribution nationally as early as the fourth quarter of 2015. The European, 100% cotton product is produced and made from certified Eco-Conscious materials and contains no harmful dyes. It has also been branded "Confidence In Textiles" after passing certification, being free of harmful substances in accordance with the Oeko-Tex Standard 100. The super absorbent, durable towels are lint-free and soft on dishes and glassware. Open stock will be available as well as combined tea and hand towel sets.

For more details, please contact info@universalstone.ca



Ergo Chef unveils Crimson series

Fox Run Brands will be helping retailers promote the new Ergo Chef Crimson Series of knives this holiday season. The popular 8-inch Crimson Chef Knife, shown above, is available with a patented ergonomic design for more comfort and less strain. Each knife in the series is crafted with G10. One of the world's strongest materials, it provides a razor sharp blade.

Nordic Ware honoured by MBM

Nordic Ware has been awarded the 2015 Manufacturing Award in Sustainability by *Minnesota Business Magazine*. Based in St. Louis Park, the privately held company that created the world-famous Bundt Cake pan, is on the eve of its 70th year in business.

Minnesota Business Magazine collected nominations over a two-month period and all nominations were reviewed by an external judging panel that consisted of industry experts across all professional platforms.

"Nordic Ware is committed to using sustainable manufacturing methods in producing its products," says David Dalquist, CEO and president of Nordic Ware. "Recycling materials, limiting waste streams and reducing our energy consumption make us more competitive while also minimizing our environmental footprint."



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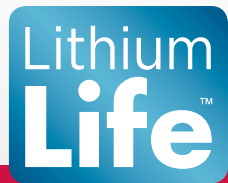
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Eating your way to success

by Candace Sutcliffe, President, CA Paradis/The Chef's Paradise



The world is definitely becoming a smaller place and food seems to be at the centre of our universe. No longer just a necessity to fuel your body, the culture of food has become the endless topic of conversation for TV, blogs, media outlets and even major Hollywood film productions. Culinary challenges are showcasing the physical stamina and focus required in the kitchen which can parallel even the most developed professional athletes. Being in the business of food (or ways to prepare to it) has never been better. As with all industries, the internet is transforming all aspects of the cooking/restaurant industry; shining a light on a world of new cuisines and creating an entirely new micro-demographic of kitchenware shoppers.

The *Spice Spoon* food blogger Shayma Saadat moved to Toronto from Rome (by way of Afghanistan) in 2009. Saadat graduated as an Economics major from Cambridge University but had difficulties finding work in her new city.

During her relentless six month job search, she would often find solace and comfort in the kitchen, introducing her Canadian friends to South Asian cuisines that had been passed down by her Afghani-Pakistani "with a hint of Iranian" heritage. It brought her warmth in a cold climate and she quickly developed an Instagram following by posting pics for her family back home. Though she had mastered Italian cuisine while working for the UN when living in Rome, she felt that *The Spice Spoon* was an opportunity to showcase the delicate and romantic aspects of her native Afghanistan and Pakistan "because at the moment nobody

is talking about the beauty of these places" she lamented. Saadat has become an international voice for what she refers to as Silk Route Cuisine and was recently honoured as one of the 50 Best Food Websites by *The Independent UK*. Saadat is a regular speaker and cookery instructor across Canada and the US, whose mission is to showcase the beauty and humanity of her native home through food.

Cooking has also proven to have therapeutic values. Naomi Duguid, a Canadian food-writer and culinary anthropologist, recently noted through her travels around the world in war torn and desolate areas "people use their daily patterns of necessity – most often cooking – to make things normal again."

Food is the language that helps assimilate a group into a new surrounding. It provides emotional stability and a shared language within society, as demonstrated by Shayma Saadat's journey, but also with notable names such as Nigella Lawson (*How to Eat*), Irma Rombauer (*Joy of Cooking*) or Alberta's own Jean Paré (*Company's Coming*) who have used cooking as a means to emotional repair after life altering events; such as the death of Lawson's first husband, mother then sister, the trauma Rombauer lived after her husband's suicide and the necessity for Paré to provide for her family after her husband left them in total despair.

As a kitchenware specialist, it is stories like these that remind us food is the binding ingredient among society. The more culturally neutral a business becomes, the better prepared we are to receive new customer groups. While an open-mind can serve both clients and business own-

ers alike, learning to adapt to a microcosm of various cultures can provide an unrivalled in-store experience for new-generation descents. Understanding how and why people decide to buy can provide the required enlightenment on how to develop a personalized shopping experience for a new customer base. As our retail society learns to adopt new selling techniques, protocols, negotiating styles and value systems into the cultural mainstream – think real-time analytics – the more likely we are to develop a strong connection to our larger "local" community.

Being open-minded to new foods is more than just understanding new cultures. Millennials are spearheading the way by challenging businesses as to the who, what and where their goods are made. These tastemakers are leading the way up the food ladder, swooning over heightened food experiences; think whole foods juice craze, gluten-free diets and the culmination of global flavors wrapped up in some sort of shell. According to *Bon Appetit*, the magazine's circulation is at an all time high thanks to the millennials. They claim 80% of this demographic prefers to know the history of what they are buying and what the health benefits are to them. They spend 30% more on goods which are ethically sourced and 87% more likely to "splurge" on luxury goods relating to food and cooking than any other age group.

Food has become a mode self-expression. The cooking journey doesn't end once the ingredients or proper cooking pan have been purchased. Fortunately for kitchenware and gourmet food retailers, cooking is an evolving experience. 🍴

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Out of the ordinary

Michelle Hespe meets the innovative owners of **Koskela** in Australia— one of the five inspiring retail stores that became a Global Honoree at the prestigious *gia* awards gala held during the 2015 Chicago housewares show

There's a great quote by American entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker John Rohn that captures the essence of what Australian retail duo Sasha Titchkosky and Russel Koskela set out to do. "If you are not willing to risk the unusual, you will have to settle for the ordinary."

The determined pair knew they were

taking a risk when they set their hearts and minds on a 2,000-square-metre warehouse that hadn't been used in over three years for their fledgling retail business. It was also in a part of Sydney that was a far cry from being a retail hub. But they believed in their dream of creating a business and a space that was not only out of the ordinary, but some-

thing new and inspiring for Sydneysiders and all who visited. They also had their minds set upon helping the world around them.

"The original idea was formed 15 years ago in 2000, when we first started Koskela, which was then a company primarily catering to the corporate market, producing furniture for innovative





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Australian offices,” explains Titchkosky. “However, we both always wanted to do something great with the retail side of the business.”

Fast forward a few years, and in 2004, Koskela relocated to a 450-square-metre New York-style loft space that was set up like a living space, and the focus shifted to being both commercial, and to a lesser extent, retail. Then in 2011, the warehouse was discovered, and the Koskela that people know and love was born: an enormous space with a café, workshop space and gallery, selling Koskela furniture and a curated selection of Australian and ethically made homewares.

Jump ahead again four years to 2015, and Koskela has just been named as one of the five top retailers in the world at the Global Innovation Awards (*gia*) in Chicago, which are hosted by the International Housewares Association (IHA) and the International Home + Housewares Show.

“It’s one of the most exciting times in the history of our business,” says Titchkosky. “The first 10 years we focused on the commercial side of things while having a family, and over the last five years, we’ve turned our attention back to our original dream of creating a unique retail concept.”

The pair did their research before making the jump, always keeping an

eye on competitor businesses. They understood that for any retail space to succeed in today’s tough and saturated market, a business needs to give people multiple reasons to visit, and that it has to provide visitors with a real experience.

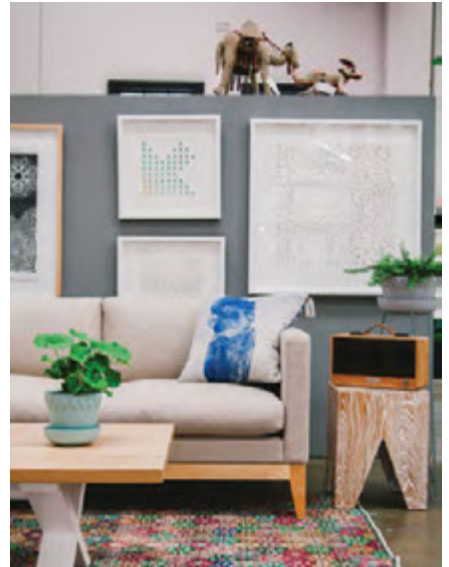
“We always wanted to do something with food, as food and design seem like a natural match, so we created the café on our site,” says Titchkosky. “We also set aside a gallery space and now have new artists exhibiting every 4-6 weeks. We are also now running workshops, as we often discussed that people have no space to create a mess at home, so they can come and get into things here.”

The workshops encompass everything from macramé to embroidery, screen-printing, and even classes where guests can make a piece of furniture.

There are so many outstanding points of difference when it comes to Koskela – such as the sheer size of the place for one – but one of the things that resonates with many who have become loyal fans is the business focus on good design affecting social change.

“We want Koskela products to last – whether they are for the workplace or home, for educational or recreational environments. We design products that are destined to become classics.”

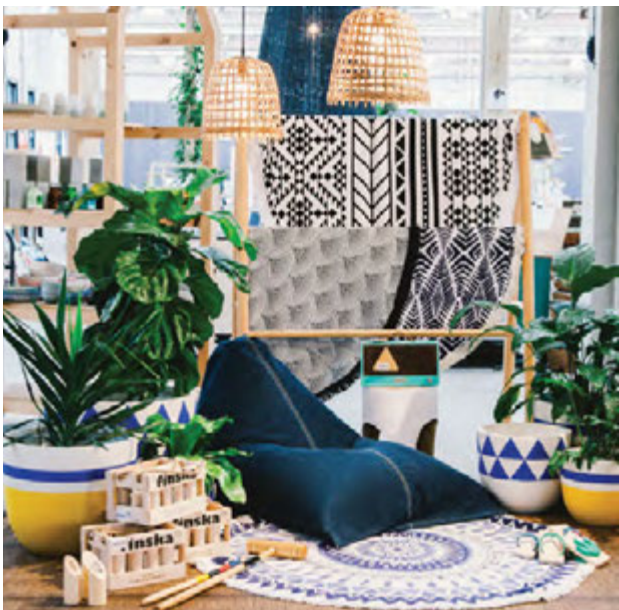
Koskela is extremely conscious of the impact people and products have on the



planet, and so looks carefully at what goes into the many pieces that they stock. The couple is also continually evaluating the way in which they do business, to ensure that they are taking care of customers and those behind the creation of their wares.

“We make sure that our products are made in a way that does not impact the health and wellbeing of the workers making them,” says Titchkosky. “And we are deeply committed to social enterprise – using our design skills to empower Australian Aboriginal artists and artisans through collaborations.”

Their efforts don’t stop there. Koskela has over 85% of its furniture range inde-



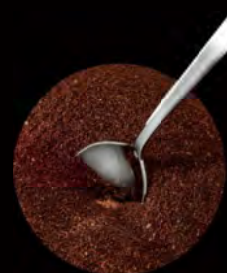
Products at Koskela are designed to last. Most are sourced from local artisans as the owners focus on design that affects social change.

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pendently certified as being environmentally innovative. All of the smaller products are either made locally, by smaller artisan makers, or are made internationally with an ethical or social enterprise manufacturing focus. And as if that's not impressive enough, Koskela aims to invest 10% of all their profits back into social enterprise products that they have developed in collaboration with highly disadvantaged Australian indigenous communities.

"The product ranges that were created as part of these collaborations have benefitted over 100 women and have been exhibited in Japan and Australia," says Titchkosky with pride. "They are the first products of their kind which combine contemporary design with traditional craft forms practiced over thousands of years."

The judges in Chicago were impressed by Koskela's many initiatives, and by the feeling of creativity, warmth and community that the company has created on and offline. They loved the store's displays and "effective use of an impressive premises, innovative practices including a brand-fitting in-store café" and their strong social responsibility programs.

"It was great to be able to have some time one-on-one with one of the

Known for its innovative displays, Koskela used an enormous ball of Australian wool to promote Wool Week throughout the country.

judges," says Titchkosky of her *gia* experience. "There are always things you can do better, and I found the judges' critiques of our store really helpful."

Now, with a *gia* award taking pride of place in their warehouse, and with more innovative business plans being concocted by the day, Koskela is headed for great things, and the happy couple behind it could not be more pleased with their direction.

"We both love the fact that we are creating something meaningful," says Titchkosky. "We want to bring Australian design to the world. It is so rewarding to see something that starts out as an idea actually turn into a real product. We took a risk and this is where it has led us." 🐣

*For information about the *gia* program, contact Piritta Törrö at piritta.torro@inspired-connection.fi. Additional information is also available at www.housewares.org/gia.*

For more information about the 2016 International Home + Housewares Show, taking place in Chicago on March 5-8, 2016, please visit www.housewares.org.

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Against all odds



After suffering a terrible tragedy, Bruno Belanger found a way to start over with the B.C. store his mother founded. Today, Gemma's is well-known for its kitchenware, giftware, and wide selection of beautiful items produced by First Nations people

By Denise Gaze

The most amazing thing about Bruno Belanger's story is that he is still here to tell it.

Back in 1983, Bruno took over Gemma's Bathroom Boutique, a store started by his mother, Gemma, in Terrace, British Columbia, a town located four hours from Hyder, Alaska. He was just 26 at the time, and he still had a lot to learn about the business.

That first year, Bruno, his mom and their store manager drove to the Edmonton Gift show so Gemma could in-

troduce him to the suppliers and vendors. On the way home from the show, tragedy struck when Bruno pulled over to the side of the road. Not able to get the car started, Bruno walked to the back of it to look for jumper cables.

"I went to open the trunk and I thought I heard an angel's voice tell me to tie my shoelace," recalls Bruno. "So I bent down, and that is when an 18-wheeler plowed into my car. I was sucked underneath the truck's bumper. My mother was killed and our store

manager was seriously injured."

It was a hell of a beginning for a young man who was starting a new business venture. But Bruno is nothing if not resilient, especially when he faced another life threatening situation in 1986 while attending the same Edmonton Gift Show. He was aboard a VIA rail passenger train that was involved in the worst accident in Alberta's history, when it collided with a CNR Freight train. Twenty-three people were killed and 95 others were injured.

Despite this auspicious start, 32 years later Bruno is still standing. He has steadily built upon the business his late mother founded, and he has been wildly successful at it too.

Born in St. Moise in the Gaspé area of Quebec, Bruno has lived in Terrace since he was a young child. He has grown to love the region, and the residents have grown to love Gemma's Bed, Bath, Kitchen, Gifts & Souvenirs. It's recognized as one of northern B.C.'s largest and most unique boutiques.

Unique not only describes Bruno's store, but also Bruno himself. Extremely entrepreneurial and industrious by nature, he had purchased his first home by



Gemma's owner Bruno Belanger, above left, and the mural on the side of the store, left.



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Retail Profile: Gemma's

the time he graduated high school. During the summers, Bruno worked for CN Rail and saved his money.

"I was paid extremely well during those summers," he recalls. "I bought a two bedroom house and rented out one of the bedrooms. The following year, I sold that house and bought a piece of property where I built a five bedroom house. I rented out four of those bedrooms."

Bruno decided he would only rent the extra rooms to female teachers who had recently graduated. He knew that they had good paying jobs.

"I went to the school board and posted my ad," says Bruno "Not only was I able to pay off my mortgage, it's how I met my wife as well. I married a grade one school teacher – Krista Bottyan – who had rented one of the rooms."

For 30 years, the original Gemma's store was located in the Skeena Shopping Mall. Bruno expanded from the bath boutique concept that his mother Gemma started. He opened another store for kitchen, then later added the popular First Nations Art Gallery.

The idea to add a First Nations Gallery came to Bruno after attending a motivational lecture given by Roy Prevost about how to survive against the big box stores moving in.

"After the lecture, I invited Roy to my house, along with my staff, for a barbecue," says Bruno. "We had a great discussion and the next day, he came to the Skeena Mall with me. We noticed a lot of First Nation people were shopping there and he asked 'who is looking after their needs'? The answer was 'nobody'. So right away, I opened up a 3,000-square-foot First Nations store.

The First Nations store carries blankets, ornaments, paddles masks, jewellery and more. A single hand-carved mask can fetch up to \$3000. Bruno has nine local carvers working for him and he is now the largest supplier of First Nations jewellery and original art out-

side of Vancouver.

Bruno carries items that each tribe in Terrace can relate to. In a town of under 12,000 people, both tourists and the First Nations people support the store.

"Bruno helps give First Nations people a voice and an opportunity to sell and promote their handcrafted products," says western sales rep Chris Porter. "He is an ambassador for Terrace and a true community supporter. It's incredible the volume he buys given the relatively small population."

In 2008, in preparation for retirement, Bruno made the decision to reduce his operation down to one store. His new location is in downtown Terrace with a good deal of walk-by traffic. To scale down from three stores, Bruno took a percentage of merchandise from each



Bruno Bellanger stands in front of his new 5,000-square-foot store, right. It features a wall of kitchen gadgets, his best seller, and a large display of gourmet sauces and dips.

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Retail Profile: Gemma's

store and showcased it all in a single 5,000-square-foot space.

Bruno currently employs four full-time employees and three part-time staff including 'the fudge lady' who comes in two to three times a month to make 'Calico Cottage Fudge'.

All the buying for the store is done by Bruno himself. Gemma's currently carries about 5,000 SKUs in housewares.

"My bestsellers are kitchen gadgets," says Bruno. "Small appliances also sell well and because I am surrounded by First Nation's people, oversized cookware such as 180-quart stock pots do very well."

The store also has a large section devoted to Gourmet Village hot sauces and drink mixes, as well as cheese balls, gourmet coffees and much more.

"I always look for something different for the shop," explains Bruno. "My philosophy is to bring it in at the 'risk' of

it selling even if I feel hesitant."

His philosophy has paid off. Gemma's has been operating for 36 years and in 1995, Gemma's was listed by *Profit Magazine* as the 150th top-grossing company in Canada.

"I am active on all local radio stations and run ads three to four times a day," says Bruno. "We also advertise in the *Hot Air Flight* magazine, a local airline."

For 11 years, Bruno has also been the vice president of Kermodei Tourism, appointed by the city. He handles the marketing and, along with several others, puts together the tourist travel guides. He advertises in them too!

Prior to taking over Gemma's, Bruno spent five years as a sales representative handling all the marketing and advertising for TGFW North Country radio.

"I know that my marketing skills really helped propel Gemma's growth," says Bruno. "I also have a great relation-



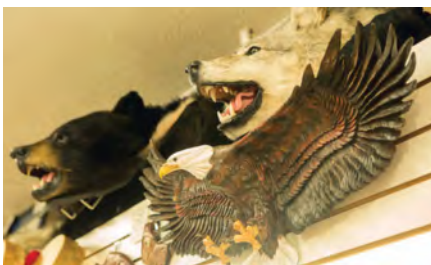
ship with my suppliers and their accounting departments because I phone my payment in using a credit card. I only see my reps twice a year, but I do put in substantial orders."

Bruno uses social media to promote the store products, but credits his staff for always making the customer feel welcome, which keeps them coming back.

"The most important lesson I have learned is to make sure you look after your customers," he tells *Home Style*. "I expect my staff to get to know the customers. I have learned you need to empower your staff to help you run your business. I empower my staff by getting them totally involved in the business. If they ever left here, they could easily open up their own businesses."

Bruno's staff are so capable he has been able to leave the store not once, but twice, for a full year! The first time was when he followed his then girlfriend (now wife) to Abbotsford B.C., a mere 14 hours away from Terrace. He gave power of attorney to his store manager, who would ship all the paperwork to Abbotsford where Bruno would go over it and pay the bills.

"My business has never held me down," he says. "Krista decided to take a year off from teaching in order to travel so that's what we did."



Gemma's was the first store in the region to specialize in First Nations items such as paddles, carvings, clothing, jewelry, and tribal masks, far left, which can cost as much as \$3000. The store also carries about 5,000 SKUs of housewares and over-sized cookware geared to the needs of First Nation communities.

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Retail Profile: Gemma's

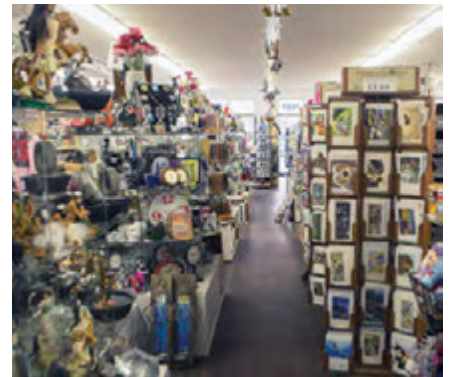


When not globetrotting, Bruno spends his time tirelessly promoting Terrace. He supports non-profit organizations such as Ronald MacDonald House; The Terrace Pacific Northwest Music Festival Park Avenue School Scholarship Terrace Concert Society and many local charities.

With his wife's retirement only a few months away, Bruno hopes he can find someone to mentor who could eventually take over his business.

"I would like to phase the business out over the next three years," says Bruno. "I hope to offer my housewares SKUs to someone if they found a good location. I would even take them to the gift show and teach them how to run a successful business."

Bruno recently celebrated his 60th birthday over several days in Vancouver. He went to a White Caps soccer game, the Vancouver Canucks Pre-season game, took a harbour cruise, en-



joyed lots of fine dining and visited friends. He also visited the Vancouver Expo Gift Show.

Bruno is now ready to begin the next chapter. Perhaps because not once, but twice, his story was almost cut short, he knows how to appreciate life. He has travelled the world, gives back to his community and runs a profitable business that still honours his mother. Whatever comes next for Bruno Belanger, his story isn't over yet. 🐦

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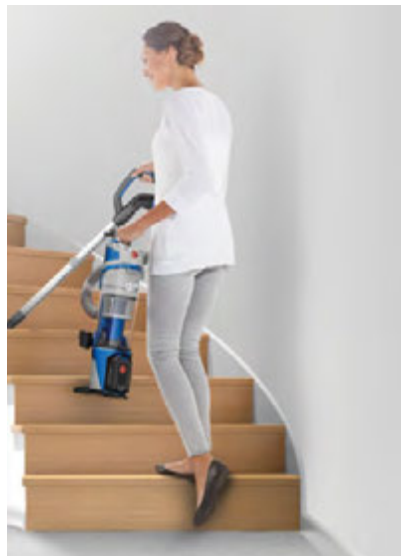
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Clean and fresh

What's new in scrubbers, brooms, vacuums and air cleaners



The **Hoover** Air Cordless Lift goes from the deep cleaning power of an upright vacuum to the portability of a canister – all without the hassle of a cord. The lightweight (12.5 lbs) Air can be easily maneuvered around furniture, while powerful WindTunnel 3 Technology easily picks up embedded dirt and debris. Powered by LithiumLife Battery Technology, this unit provides on average 50 minutes of fade-free suction.



Unlike traditional vacuums, the **Dirt Devil** 360 Reach bagless stick vac has a lightweight design and extended reach arm that allows clean-up from floor to ceiling. The 4-in-1 stick vacuum uses a Cyclonic Filtration system, creating powerful suction to cut through any mess. The Vac+Dust Tools capture heavy dirt and debris, while the SWIPES micro-pads eliminate all traces of dust. The Crevice Tool can extend the cleaning reach to swipe dust and debris. A pivoting extension tool provides precision and control when cleaning areas that are out of reach. It also features a 27-foot cord and stair/upholstery tool.



With intelligent visual navigation, app control and Wi-Fi connectivity, the iRobot Roomba 980 takes cleaning to a whole new level. It's the first vac to combine adaptive navigation with visual localization to clean for up to two hours, recharging and resuming as needed. The app gives users control over their Roomba 980 anywhere, anytime. Available from **United Sales & Marketing**.

Guardian Technologies has launched the Clean Series of air purifiers. The new units combine filtration and UV technologies in an easy-to-use, affordable design. It features three filtration levels to remove common household odors while capturing and destroying airborne bacteria. Distributed by **TFG Concepts**.





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Clean and fresh



The cordless **Bissell** SpotClean, left, permanently removes spots and stains using water, Bissell formula and powerful suction. From high-traffic areas to stairs, the SpotClean is conveniently compact and comes with hand-held cleaning tools. At less than 11 pounds, the Bissell PowerGlide cordless vacuum, right, offers go-anywhere freedom in a light-weight yet powerful package. With a quick, two-hour lithium-ion battery charge, the PowerGlide allows up to a 45-minute run time per charge. Thanks to Lift-Off technology, access to hard-to-reach areas is easy.



Tidy dish cloths and towels from Full Circle, above, are made of 100% organic cotton grown without chemicals or pesticides. They're available in three colour patterns from **DanESCO**.



The Soapy Sponge by Joseph Joseph has an integrated soap-dispensing capsule that release the optimal amount of liquid. The sponge has a triple-layer construction for different cleaning tasks. Each pack, available from Danesco, includes three sponges, one soap capsule and sponge holder.

The **Dyson** V6 Absolute, below, is perfect for condos or tiny homes. The cordless unit features a soft roller cleaner head that tackles both small and large debris on the floor and a motor head to vacuum carpets. The HEPA filtration unit captures allergens and expels cleaner air.



"Happy" orange and clear quartz mist is designed to brighten any room while masking unpleasant odors. It's safe for children and pets since it's made from organic, fair trade ingredients that are eco-friendly. Available from **Holistic Spaces**.



MSC International will be promoting the Ribbit soap brush this fall. The brush dispenses soap at the touch of a button and is safe to use on non-stick cookware. It's safe for the top rack of the dishwasher.

The World's Best 100% Linen Dish Cloth from **Jogi's Imports** is now available in a "display-ready" full colour POP counter/shelf unit. Each CDU contains 18 linen dishcloths, each individually belly-banded with the 'World's Best' logo in fully bilingual packaging. Made in Poland, the environmentally-friendly, lint-free towels have an open weave design that allows for quick drying.

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Clean & fresh

Fresco cleaning gloves from **Jascor** are water-resistant to protect hands and nails. The environmentally-friendly latex gloves have a 100% cotton lining for extra moisture absorption and extra long, 5-inch cuffs for protection. They also have a slip-resistant grip.



Counseltron's Felix dish brush by Vigar, left, is stylish and efficient. This dish brush is ideal for washing plates as it doesn't scratch and can be washed in the dishwasher. It has soft nylon fibers, ergonomic handle and a cute silicone tie. Also by Vigar, the durable Rococco pink and black scrub brush, above, features nylon bristles and a smartly-designed handle. This utility scrubber is perfect for a range of cleaning tasks.



Remodeez from **Port-Style** removes moisture and odor with an eco-friendly, biodegradable, active charcoal ingredient. The odor busting packs absorb odor to keep shoes, luggage and gym bags smelling fresh. Each one will last 3-4 months after which the carbon can be composted in the garden.



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Natural wood

New tableware and serveware crafted from wood

Cut from a single piece of natural olive wood, these platters and serving trays by Natural Living, below, have an incredibly smooth surface. They can be used for cheese, fruit or charcuterie. The Acacia line, right, is designed to hold salads, carry festive beverages or store holiday treats. Beautifully unique grain patterns provide natural variations in colour and appearance. Distributed by **DanESCO**.



The LSA Lotta collection, above, includes a variety of pieces for presentation and serveware. They are designed with simple clean lines and made of wood and mouthblown European glass. Each piece in the Paddle collection, right, allows glasses to be nestled into the oak paddle. FSC certified, each wood paddle will develop a nice patina over time. Distributed by **David Shaw**.



Trudeau has introduced these handy flip tongs, above. The lightweight tongs are made of solid beechwood. They're constructed without any pins or screws to effortlessly flip one way to use and then flip the other way to store flat, taking up less space in the kitchen drawer. They are easy to handle and suitable for non-stick pans or woks.

The Robinia Wood Collection by Bérard France features contemporary hardwood pieces artfully crafted with wood from responsibly managed forests. Each piece has a striking end grain pattern and is resistant to deterioration. The hardwood board, shown left, is gentle on knives. Available from **Browne Co.**



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Natural wood

Fox Run Brands is launching four new Acacia wood boards from Ironwood Gourmet. The Big Catch, left, has a trench that's ideal for prepwork or to hold olive pits, etc. The versatile serving board, below, easily transports food or beverages and features leather handles.



Consumers can serve in style with Counseltron's new bamboo tray in a rich honey colour. This tray is suitable for any occasion. It's both durable and environmentally friendly. Lightweight, durable and environmentally-friendly, Bamboo resists moisture, stains or mildew. The tray comes gift-boxed, left.

This lovely Acacia rectangular cheese board set comes with a small dome to keep food fresh. Available from **Everyware Global**, it comes gift boxed and will be launched in January.



Cuisinart now offers a professional-quality carving set for the discerning cook, above. It includes an ultra-sharp blade of the 8-inch carving knife and stainless steel fork (not shown). The carving board is made of sustainable Acacia wood and provides an ideal surface for carving, chopping or slicing. Also new is this cheese board, right. It features three cheese tools and a cutting board made of natural beech bark. It's perfect for special occasions or parties.



The Nuance line from **Swissmar** includes this hand-crafted mortar & pestle, left. It's made of European beechwood and polished stainless steel. Ergonomically-designed, it easily crushes herbs and spices and comes gift-boxed. Below, this elegant rolling pin is made of Danish beechwood with stainless accents. It also comes gift-boxed.



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Coffee etc.

What's hot in coffee pods, filters, mugs and more



On Route is introducing the new SoloPod from Solofill, above. This refillable filter cup is compatible with first generation and 2.0 brewing systems. It lets users brew their own favourite coffee, save money and reduce environmental impact. The SoloClip, top, easily converts a Keurig 2.0 brewer to use any K-Cup. Also new from On Route, the Skinny Girl line features premium ingredients offering a new flavour twist. Sweetened with stevia, Skinny Girl's London Fog, Latté and Hot Chocolate are only 50 calories per cup.



The vintage-style Avenue tabletop collection from **Abbott** includes a range of coffee mugs and tea cups featuring high intensity colours, including grey and mint, above. The thick commercial grade porcelain ensures that hot beverages remain warmer, longer. The mugs, saucers and bowl are safe to go in the dishwasher and microwave oven.



Your customers can go back to the old-fashioned, flavourful way of brewing a single cup of coffee with the Aerolatte ceramic coffee filter from **Port-Style Enterprises**. The filter extracts coffee's natural subtle flavours and is designed to use a number two filter. It's made from the finest quality porcelain to ensure a smoother, more flavourful coffee. It's also safe to put in the dishwasher

Product Specialties is promoting its new range of double-wall stainless steel coffee cups this year. Available in three convenient sizes and multiple sets, these cups are a great accessory for home brewers.



The LSA Paddle collection, available from **David Shaw Designs**, allows entertainers to offer guests prepared espressos on a specially crafted wooden tray. The serving piece is made of natural FSC certified oak with porcelain cups and a sugar bowl nested within. Made in Europe, the set is boxed for gift-giving.



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Coffee etc.



Caffitaly has introduced several new pod flavours for its sleek new S07 coffeemaker line. Intenso decaf coffee, above left, is the perfect blend of Indian robusta and South American arabica, providing an intense, fruity aroma. Cuba features fine quality 100% Arabica for an intense, bull-bodied aroma with a light, balanced taste.



The new spice cup grater from **Microplane**, left, is designed to easily add grated toppings to beverages. Crafted in creamy white, the durable, lightweight 'bottomless' grater features a compact, round Microplane blade and a transparent cover that can be used as a base.

A leader in the insulated beverage category, **Trudeau** has unveiled two new travel mugs as part of their Boardroom series. The 16-ounce desk mug, below left, has a snap-on lid to reduce spills, a comfortable grip and a soft, non-scratch base. The travel mug, right, has a leak-resistant 360° lid, double wall insulation and a durable TPU sleeve that is hand washable. Both come in beige or grey colours.



The Dolce Vita set from BIA Cordon Bleu includes six espresso cups and saucers in a delightful multi-coloured stripe design. Made of fine porcelain, each cup has a 3.4-ounce capacity and the set comes beautifully gift-boxed. The Ombre collection of glazed coffee mugs, below, are made of ceramic stoneware and topped off with a glaze finish that gives each one a handcrafted appeal. The set features four patterns. BIA Cordon Bleu is distributed by **DanESCO**.

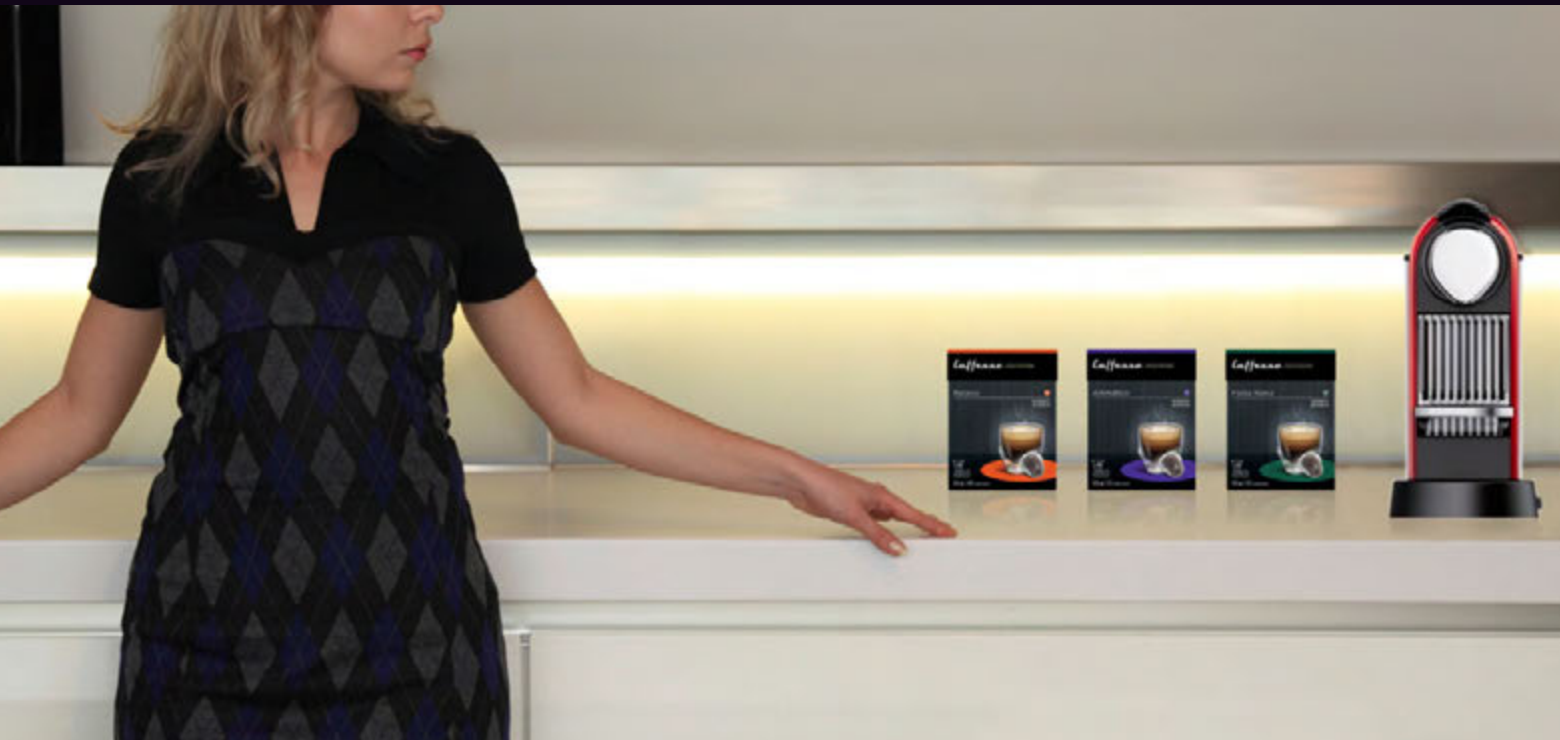


InterContinental offers several accessories to go with its new Ekobrew coffeemaker. The collection includes patented reusable filters, top left, that are easy to clean and remove. They fit both 1.0 and Keurig 2.0 single cup brewers. The line also includes biodegradable Ekobrew paper filters, shown bottom left.



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Store & contain

The latest designs in home storage and organization

New for Spring 2016, these FoodSaver Fresh Containers from **Jarden Consumer Solutions** are the perfect addition to complete any home food preservation system. Available in four convenient sizes (3, 5, 8 & 10 cup), FoodSaver Fresh Containers are stackable, BPA-free, microwave, refrigerator, dishwasher and freezer safe. Features also include vacuum seal valves that easily connect to all existing FoodSaver systems for an effortless airtight seal to help keep food fresher longer.



These extra-large laundry bags from **Paderno** provide a stylish and tidy way transport clothes. Each bag measures 25 inches by 14 inches. They're made from a durable polyester fabric and feature an ergonomic handle for easy carrying. The bags store flat to save space and come in five different colours.



Counseltron's new 2-tier rolling cart by **Metaltex** is made in Italy. The cart comes with two baskets and a shelf on top. It is ideal for sorting items in small spaces. The smooth rolling wheels are great for easy movement and scratch free floors.



Sebastian Conran has created a contemporary compost bin as part of his collection for **Universal Expert**. Distributed by **David Shaw**, the lid has a convenient carbon odor filter. It features a stainless steel body with rubber handle.



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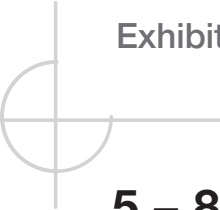
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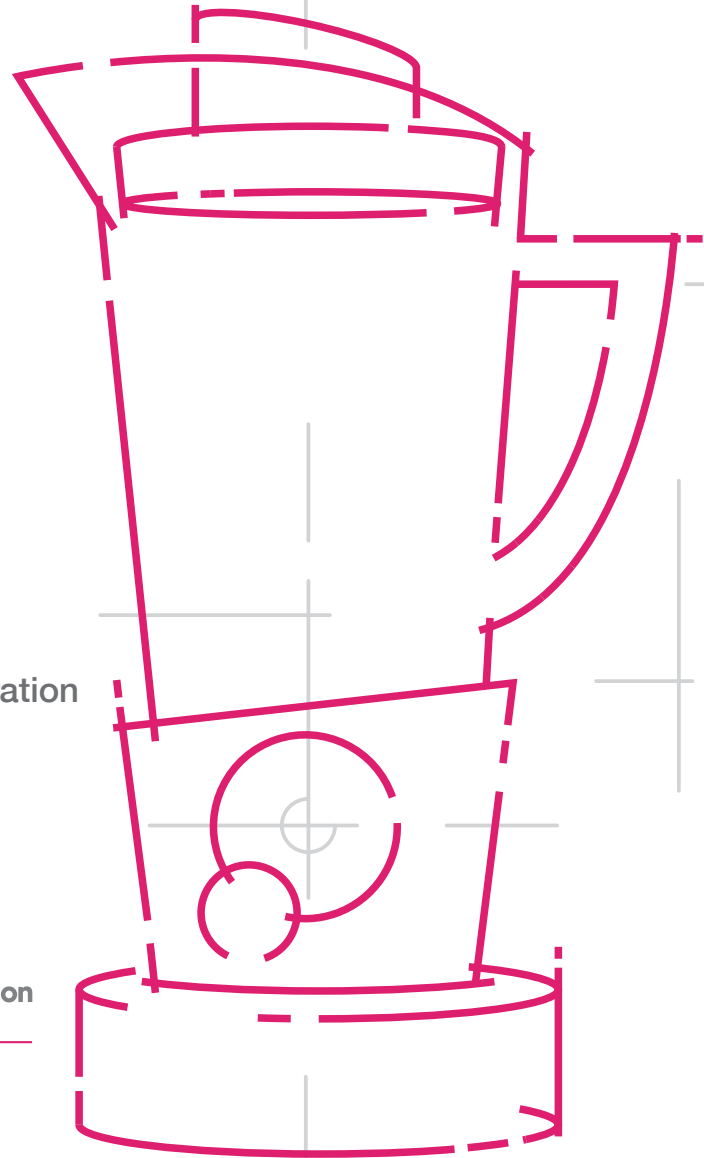
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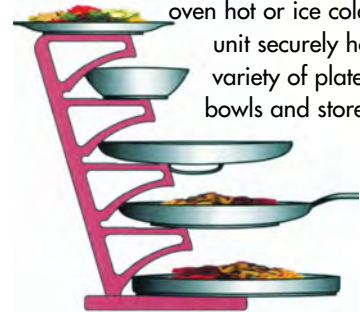
Store & contain



Swissmar is unveiling a range of home storage items under the Jamie Oliver brand. The line includes a coffee, tea and sugar tin set, and utensil holder, large cake tin and a lovely bread tin. Each piece in the collection is retro-inspired and made of carbon steel with a classic sky blue and cream design. A silicone seal on the food containers ensures they're air tight for fresh storage. The bread tin, right, features a grooved underside to catch crumbs and a lid that doubles as a cutting board.



The Spacemaker from **The Vertical Tray**, below, stacks for the counter or table to conveniently hold a variety of plates and bowls, whether they're oven hot or ice cold. The unit securely holds a variety of plates and bowls and stores flat.



This 3-tier stackable utility shelf from **Neatfreak** is perfect for sports equipment with three easy care fabric bins.



Breeze countertop compost collectors by Full Circle, left, keeps odors at a minimum with an innovative Fresh Air technology that allows for aerobic decomposition. This slower, gentler process prevents build-up of fluids. Distributed by **DanESCO**, they're made of recycled plastic and partially recycled steel with a 3.2-litre capacity. DanESCO is also introducing these contemporary countertop canisters, below. Offered in rose gold or silver coated metallic paint, they have clear lids with silicone gaskets.





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The Food Words That Need To Disappear

- **Foodie** – The worst food word crime of them all.
- **'Za** – Don't insult your pizza by calling it anything but pizza.
- **Sando** – Sandwiches are cute and all, but not that cute. (Runner-up: Sammie)
- **Yummy** (or Yummo) – After the age of ten this is just weird.
- **Mouthfeel** – I don't want to imagine what the inside of your mouth feels like.
- **Delish** – Just, no.
- **EVOO** – I love you Rachael Ray, but this haunts me.
- **Locavore** – Yeah, I like shopping at the farmers market too.
- **Delectable** – The word people use when they don't want to say "delicious".
- **Sinful** – Eating is pleasure (and sustenance), not sin. Don't mix the two.
- **Nom** – I'm sure we can be more descriptive than this, right?
- **Orgasmic** – *When Harry Met Sally* has ruined us all forever.
- **Succulent** – Because Pinterest exists, and this refers to a plant.

Food Phrases With No Juice Left in Them

- **Cooked to perfection** – Perfect doesn't mean anything.
- **Take it to the next level** – I'm so sorry but chicken breasts really don't have multiple "levels" to go to.
- **Best ever** – Oh tell me more about this miracle sandwich of yours.
- **Depth of flavour** – What does this even mean?
- **Tastes like crack** – No, your food is not like drugs.
- **Party in your mouth** – I don't want to know what's happening in your mouth.
- **Jazz up** – Please, no.
- **Cloyingly sweet** – Too sweet. We get it.

Source: "FROM THE KITCHEN" website and blog

Close to half of all kids can cook from scratch

Almost 40% of children ages 7–17 say they have recently cooked a meal from scratch, according to the Cassandra Report, and the rise of gourmet pretend kitchens, complete with pint-sized play stainless steel pots and pans, aimed at kids reflects the growing upscale cooking trend. "Now, it's socially acceptable for a kid to be a food phenom comparable to a sports or arts phenom," says Karen Grinthal of the *Food Network* and *Cooking Channel*.

Consumers plan to spend big this Christmas

About 13% of consumers say they'll spend more than \$1,000 on holiday gifts this year, while 3% will spend less than \$50, according to a survey from Epsilon. The majority will buy gifts at stores, and more than three-quarters will use their computers to shop, the survey found. Twenty-six percent of consumers will buy home decor as a holiday gift, while 12% will buy small appliances.

A study from BloomReach shows that 44% of American e-shoppers go right to Amazon when they start their online shopping process. Thirty-four percent go straight to a top search engine like Google, and 21% start at a retailer's site.

Browne & Co.	37
Breville	25
Caffitaly	57
CanGift (Toronto Gift Fair)	45
Canada Night	18
Counseltron	13
Cuisinart Canada	39
Cuisivin	20
DanESCO	23, 43
ErgoChef	44
Electrolux	47
Faema	27, IBC
Fox Run Brands	26
Frankfurt Trade Fairs	16, 28
Groupe SEB	7, 55, OBC
Hamilton Beach	35
IHA - Chicago Housewares Show ..	61
International Innovation	6
Jarden Consumer Solutions	63
Le Creuset	15
Legacy Group (Omega)	31
Metal Ware (Nesco)	21
Nordic Ware	8
NY NOW	64
On Route	59
Orly Cuisine	IFC, 41
Paderno	9
Philips	19, 51
Portmeirion/Royal Selangor	5
Product Specialties	10
Ricardo	53
TTI Industries (Hoover)	29
Trudeau	11
United Sales & Marketing	17
Universal Stone	49
Wusthof	33

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Neetu Kapal

Director of Sales, TTI Canada



It's been said that middle children have to try harder just to get noticed, but that certainly wasn't the case for Neetu Kapal. Still in her mid-30s, Neetu is already the Canadian director of sales for TTI, one of the world's largest floor care companies (with brands like Hoover and Dirt Devil). Neetu says she and her siblings received equal encouragement from their hard-working parents, who immigrated to Canada from India in 1970. "They had a very strong work ethic and they instilled the same attitude in all three of their children."

Her father, Ved, in particular has been a driving force in Neetu's life. He was always "urging us to reach for the sky", and that's precisely what's she's done by expertly balancing her own family with a very demanding work life.

Born and raised in Burlington, Ontario, a thriving city about 40 minutes west of Toronto, Neetu led a typical, active suburban life. After high school, she attended the University of Guelph in order to pursue a marketing career. She soon discovered, however, that her true passion was selling.

After receiving her degree in 2003, Neetu worked briefly for News Marketing Canada before joining Black & Decker in 2004 as sales coordinator. At B&D, she really learned the ropes in the consumer products market, and her manager, Randy Ganz, quickly became her mentor. He coached her on how to build accounts and, more importantly, how to treat customers. She was a quick learner, handling hardware, outdoor products and hand vacs. It was at B&D that Neetu first met Patricia Noronha.

In 2007, Neetu married her true love and "absolute best friend" Rohit, and they settled in Thornhill, Ontario. They are now parents to two boys they adore – Jai is seven and Dev is two years old. Neetu says that Rohit, who works in logistics operations, has been "her rock" throughout her career and they're very supportive of each other. "He's my inspiration and my life coach," she says. "He is always behind me."

It's a good thing, considering how quickly

Neetu's career has progressed in a short time. In 2009 she was approached by Patricia Noronha, who by then had moved to TTI Canada as V.P. of sales and marketing. She was looking for a good account manager and wondered if Neetu was interested. She was.

"I was more than willing to take that step," she recalls, "because I knew how much I could learn from Patricia. She is such a great coach, a strong leader and has a financial acumen that is amazing."

Right from day one, she was entrusted with some pretty major accounts, including Canadian Tire and Home Hardware. But Neetu, who had already learned to look at the business through the customer's eyes, had no fear. She jumped right in and immediately started impressing both her colleagues and her customers.

John Hooke, the floor care category manager for Canadian Tire, says: "Neetu's strategic acumen has been invaluable as we continue to re-evaluate opportunities in the Canadian market to strengthen our position. She is passionate about delivering winning results for her customers! No challenge is too great, no obstacle is too high. Neetu will find and implement the solutions required. Our Canadian housewares industry is a little bit stronger today because of the hard-working, results-driven sales executives like Neetu."

High praise indeed, but well-deserved. In her six years at TTI, Neetu has been able to grow her accounts year after year. In 2010, Neetu was presented with the President's Award of Excellence from TTI and in 2015, Hoover received the Innovation award from Canadian Tire. Little wonder TTI recently promoted Neetu to director of sales, where she currently manages a team of two national account managers and a sales coordinator.

Typically humble, Neetu attributes her success to the talented and experienced buyers who have helped her grow their sales. She has a close relationship with these retailers that is based on mutual trust, and she enjoys a similar relationship with Patricia who has never regretted her decision to hire this dy-

namic young sales rep.

"I met Neetu over 10 years ago and she impressed me immediately," she says. "When you talk to her, she is completely engaged in the conversation. That was one of the things I first noticed and appreciated about her. Neetu is naturally a people person. She builds relationships and looks at things from others' perspective. While she definitely has her opinions, she is open-minded and understands all sides. As well, she is great at watching trends and really knows her business."

Probably Neetu's greatest strength is her ability to think strategically. She believes that knowledge is power and she does her homework, guided constantly by the latest floor care market data.

"An imperative part of sales is building a strong relationship with your customer," she explains. "I try to look at the business through their lens and understand their objectives. I spend much of my time analyzing market data and competitive activity and approach every meeting with a vision or strategy of how both sides will win. My approach is very direct – I can only sell what I believe is right for the customer. If it's not a fit for the retailer I am the first one to say so. I don't believe in throwing everything at the customer. Instead, I analyze the assortment gaps to further grow their category sales."

That doesn't mean relationships don't matter. "A robot can't sell to a buyer," says Neetu. "To succeed, you need to understand the customer and have empathy."

While she gives 150% at work every day, Neetu gives just as much at home after hours. She loves cooking, especially Indian food, and leads a very active life with two young boys. Yet Neetu has somehow found the perfect balance. Looking after her customers is important, but nothing gives her more joy than looking after her family." 🐾



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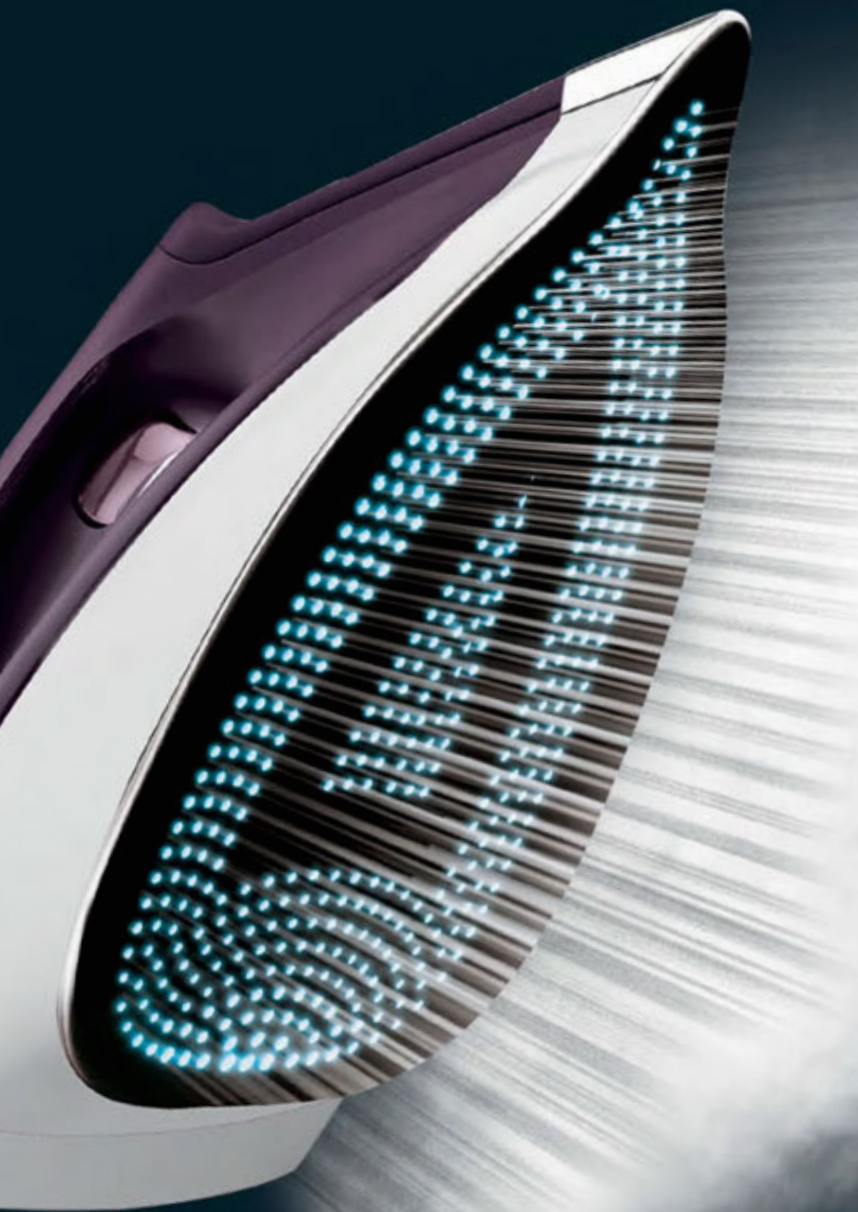
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